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REPORT

OPTIC MUSIC

Music Video Goes To The Movies

Music videos are not only changing the way we view television, they may soon have a profound effect on the way we go to the movies.

It appeared inevitable that music video, a purported orphan child of the record industry and the motion picture industry, would find a home in motion picture theatres. The two mediums (music video and motion pictures) appear to be a natural product mix.

With this scenario established, it was only a question of time that we witnessed a union between the two. In June of 1984, Music Motions premiered the first music video (referred to as music "zaps") produced exclusively for motion picture theatre exhibition. The music video was a four-minute conceptualization of Carly Simon's "It Happens Every Day." The video, which was directed and lensed by Michael Oblowitz, premiered in over 60 theatres nation-wide along with such blockbuster films as *"Gremlins," "Ghostbusters," "The Karate Kid," and "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom."*

Meanwhile, R&R Entertainment debuted its Music Theatre Network (MTN) in July. Music video concert performances of various artists were featured in 500 American Multi Cinema theatres and 200 Odeon chains in Canada.

While the ultimate objectives of the companies are similar, there are several differences between them. Music Motions' product offerings originate on 16mm or 35mm film. In addition, they restrict exploitation of these original works from electronic media such as pay, cable, or broadcast television for a period of one year. However, according to a Music Motions spokesperson, they are now expanding their product line to include non-exclusive music video acquistions such as Jermaine Jackson's "Dynamite" and Huey Lewis and the News' "Heart of Rock and Roll."

In contrast, MTN initially featured 35mm "blowups" of non-exclusive music videos by such artists as the Police, Van Halen, Duran Duran, David Bowie, Bob Dylan, Olivia Newton-John, Stevie Nicks, and Styx. Most recently, though, MTN has entered into several exclusive distribution deals. According to MTN President Robert Kardashian, MTN has an exclusive distribution deal on a newly produced Lionel Richie video featuring unreleased, live concert footage. They have also acquired an exclusive on a Billy Joel live concert video, which will be released in conjunction with his live album. Both are expected to hit theaters across the country by mid-November or the beginning of December. In yet another innovative step, MTN recently released a Barry Manilow video in theatres *prior* to the release of the album. MTN's parent company, R&R Entertainment has developed a process by which product can be converted from videotape to 35mm film at a 1.85 to 1 screen ratio. This process allows for a maintenance of clarity and proper frame alignment.

In further support of this new trend in music video viewing, several recent surveys, sampling primarily 12- to 35-years olds, showed that 82% of those surveyed indicated a strong preference for watching a feature film accompanied by a music video. The surveys also showed that an average of 41% of those surveyed felt that adding a music video had a strong bearing on their theatre selection decision if choosing between two theatres playing the same film. In addition, 30% admitted to a willingness to travel an extra 5 miles to see a film featuring a music video on the bill.

In sum, it is doubtful that music video will routinely become the primary impetus for attending the theatre unless it is a major cinematic event such as the theatrical unveiling of the "Making of Michael Jackson's 'Thriller'" video. On the other hand, music video may indeed provide a means of enhancing the movie-going experience, while maximizing the exposure and viewing quality of this rapidly developing art form.